

CHAPTER 4

ELUCIDATION OF THE DEED OF YAGYA

In Chapter 3, Yogeshwar Krishn had given the assurance that if a man followed his precept, free from delusion and with sincere devotion, he would be liberated from the bondage of action. Yog (both of knowledge and action) has the power to effect liberation from this servitude. The idea of waging war is embodied in yog. In the present chapter he points out who the author of yog is, as well as the stages by which this discipline has evolved.

- 1 “The Lord said, ‘It was I who taught the eternal yog to the Sun- (Vivaswat), who then taught it to Manu, who taught it to Ikshwaku.’ ”**

It was he, Krishn says, who at the beginning of devotion (kalp), imparted the knowledge of eternal yog to the Sun (symbolizing righteous impulses), from whom it was passed on to Manu (symbolizing mind), son and then to Ikshwaku (symbolizing aspiration). Krishn, as we have seen, was a yogi. So it is a yogi, a sage dwelling in the Supreme Spirit, who initiates the everlasting yog at the beginning or, in other words, at the commencement of worship and transmits it into the life breath. The Sun represents

श्रीभगवानुवाच

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।

विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुर्िक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥१॥

the way of God-realization.¹ God is the “one light that gives light to all.”

Yog is everlasting. Krishn has said earlier that the inception, the seed, of this process is indestructible. If it is but begun, it does not cease until it has achieved perfection. The body is cured by medicines, but worship is the remedy for the Soul. The beginning of worship is the beginning of Self-cure. This act of devotion and meditation is also the creation of an accomplished sage. To the primitive man lying unconscious in the night of ignorance, who has not given a thought to yog, is brought to the perfection of yog when he meets with a sage—just by looking at the great man, by listening to his voice, by rendering albeit an inadequate service to him, and by associating with him. Goswami Tulsidas has also said this: “Ultimate bliss is granted to the man who has perceived God as well as to the man who has been noticed by God.”

Krishn says that at the beginning he taught yog to the Sun. If a realized sage just casts a glance at a devotee, the refinement of yog is transmitted into the life-breath of the lucky Soul. All beings that live are animated by the sun—by God who is subject to himself alone. Since light is life or breath, it is ordained that the Supreme Spirit can be attained only by the regulation of life-breath. Transmission of pious instincts into early man is the imparting of knowledge of yog to the Sun, after which in due time the seed of this perfection sprouts in the mind. This is how gods pass on the knowledge to Manu. After the seed has sprouted in the mind, there will arise a wish for the realization of the sage’s utterance. If the mind has something in it, there is also the desire to achieve it. This is Manu’s preaching yog to Ikshwaku. There will be a longing, or aspiration to do that ordained act which is eternal and which liberates from the bondage of action. If it is so, there is the will to act and worship is quickened. Krishn now speaks about the point to which yog takes us after it has been set in motion.

1. In the Upanishad Prashn we find this: “The wise know him who assumes all forms, who is radiant, who is omniscient, and who is the one light that gives light to all. He rises as the sun of a thousand rays and abides in infinite places.”

2. **“Derived from tradition, this yog was known to sages of the royal stage (rajarshi),² but at this point, O the destroyer of foes, it declined and was almost extinct.”**

This yog, transmitted by an accomplished saint into the breath of the primitive, barbaric man, and thereafter flowing from breath into the mind, thence to longing (or aspiration), and from that to active practice, thus developing by gradual stages, reaches the royal stage and is then revealed to the seeker. Extraordinary powers are generated in worshippers who have reached this level. At this critical stage, yog almost ceases to be in this world (body). So the problem is how to carry it beyond this dividing line. It seems that every seeker is destroyed after reaching this stage, but according to Krishn it is not so. One who has taken refuge in him as a loved devotee and dear friend is spared.

3. **“That is the timeless yog which I now impart to you, because you are my devotee and beloved friend, and because this yog embodies a supreme mystery.”**

Arjun is a Kshatriya worshipper, of the level of rajarshi at which, lashed by waves of achievement, worshippers are in danger of being destroyed. It is not that the beneficial nature of yog is cancelled at this stage, but worshippers usually stumble after arriving at this point. That eternal and supremely mysterious yog Krishn now imparts to Arjun, because his disciple is in the same way on the brink of destruction. And he does this because Arjun is

एवं परम्पराप्राप्तीमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।

स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परंतप ॥२॥

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः ।

भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् ॥३॥

2. Readers need to be warned against a common misunderstanding about the word rajarshi. It is said that a Kshatriya is elevated to the status of rajarshi by dint of his pious life and austere devotion just as a Brahmin is raised to the position of a brahmarshi. But in truth God has made neither Brahmin nor Kshatriya, and neither Jew nor Christian. These are only social orders, based on birth or occupation. So rajarshi is used here to denote one of the four spiritual states which are distinguished only by the inner merits of a worshipper irrespective of his caste or creed. Such an interpretation is correct, for otherwise the yog of Geeta has to be assumed as meant for only members of one caste which is untenable.

devoted to him, single-mindedly reliant upon him, and a beloved friend.

When the God we crave for-the accomplished sage-abides in the Soul and begins to instruct him, only then does real worship begin. Here God and the accomplished sage- teacher, as prompters, are synonymous. If God descends into the heart at the level at which we stand, begins to check and guide, and support in case the worshipper stumbles-only then is the mind fully restrained. Unless God stands by as a charioteer, close to the Soul as a prompter, there cannot be an adequate initiation to his path. Before this the adorer is on trial; he has not yet achieved the state of true worship.

My revered teacher-my God, used to say, "Ha! I had many a narrow escape. But God saved me. God taught me this... told me that..." I sometimes asked, "Maharaj Ji, does God also speak and talk?" Thereupon he would say: "Ho, God talks exactly like you and me, for hours, and without stopping." This made me sad and I wondered how God speaks. This was an amazing revelation to me. After a while Maharaj Ji would say, "Why do you worry? God will also speak to you." Now I realize that every word of what he said is true. This is the sentiment of friendship that binds the individual Soul with the Cosmic Spirit. When God begins to resolve doubts like a friend, only then can the worshipper cross the destructive stage safely.

So far Yogeshwar Krishn has dealt with the inception of yog by a sage, the obstacles in its way, and the means of overcoming them. But Arjun now asks him :

4. "Arjun said, 'Since Vivaswat (craving for God) was born in the distant antiquity and your birth is only recent, how am I to believe that you had taught yog to him?'"

Krishn has had a recent birth, in remembered time, whereas the breath of knowledge he claims to have transmitted to the Sun belongs to "the dark backyard and abyss of time." So how is Arjun to believe that Krishn is the one who had enunciated yog at the beginning? Krishn resolves the doubt thus:

अर्जुन उवाचः अपरं भवतो जन्म परं जन्म विवस्वतः ।
 कथमेतद्विज्ञानीयां त्वमादौ प्रोक्तवानिति ॥ ४ ॥

5. “The Lord said, ‘O Arjun, you and I have passed through innumerable births but, O vanquisher of foes, whereas you do not have memory of your previous births, I do.’”

Krishn and Arjun have had numerous births, but the latter does not remember them. The worshipper does not know. But he who has beheld his Self knows it and one who has realized the unmanifest knows it. According to Krishn, his birth is unlike that of others.

Attainment of the Self is distinct from attainment of a body. Krishn’s manifestation cannot be seen with physical eyes. He is birthless, hidden, and eternal, and yet he is born with a human body. Therefore, they who preach that death of the physical body brings liberation offer, but, a false consolation.

A Soul realizes the ultimate essence while he is yet in his assumed human body. If there is even the slightest flaw, he has to undergo another birth. Till now Arjun has thought Krishn to be a mortal like him. That is why he speaks of his recent birth. Is Krishn like other bodies?

6. “Although imperishable, birthless, and God of all beings, I manifest myself subduing the materialistic world of nature by the mysterious power of atm-maya.”

Krishn is imperishable, birthless, and pervading the breath of all beings, but he is manifested when he restrains materialistic attachments by atm-maya³. One kind of maya is the moral ignorance

श्रीभगवानुवाचः बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप ॥ ५॥
अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानमीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय संभवाम्यात्ममायया ॥ ६ ॥

3. In Ram Charit Manas, the devotional retelling and translation of thirty other Indian epics, the Ramayan, by the great poet Tulsidas, Goswami Tulsidas has defined maya thus: “Whereas I and these are mine, you and those are yours.” This notion is maya, of which all creatures are victims. It is twofold, made up first of ignorance and then of enlightenment. The first is a notorious rogue because it entraps every creature in the pitfalls of birth and death. On the contrary, although the other is reputed as the only fountain of virtues, it is wholly animated by the God within and has no power of its own. The process of enlightenment is called vidya-maya. Since it unites the individual Soul with the Infinite, it is also named yog-maya. And because it enables the Soul to attain to his highest glory, it is also known as atm-maya. After accomplishment a yogi is blessed with the power that enables him to look after thousands of his disciples at once. This power, called atm-maya, is the one that is used here.

that makes one accept the reality of the material world, and which is the cause of rebirth in low and inferior forms. The other maya is that which Krishn calls yog-maya, of which we are unaware. This is the maya of Self that provides access to the Soul and leads to awareness of the Supreme Spirit. It is by the operation of this yog-maya that Krishn subdues his three-propriety nature and manifests himself.

People usually say that they will have a vision of God when he manifests himself through an incarnation. According to Krishn, however, there is no such incarnation as may be seen by others. God is not born in a corporal form. It is only by gradual stages that he controls his three-propriety nature by the exercise of yog-maya and manifests himself. But what are the circumstances of such manifestation?

7 “Whenever, O Bharat, righteousness (dharm) declines and unrighteousness is rampant, I manifest myself.”

Krishn tells the devout Arjun that when hearts fall into inertia in regard to the Supreme Spirit, the most sublime dharm, and when the pious are unable to see how to cross safely to the other bank, he begins to shape his form in order to manifest himself. Such a feeling of weariness had come to Manu. Goswami Tulsidas has written of his grief-laden heart because his life had passed without contemplation of God. When despairing tears flow from the eyes of loving worshippers because of their overpowering feeling of helplessness at their inability to steer across unrighteousness, God begins to mould his form into a manifest shape. But that also implies that God manifests himself to only loving worshippers and only for their well-being.

God's incarnation comes about only within the heart of a blessed worshipper. But what does the manifest God do?

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थामधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ ७ ॥

8. “I manifest myself from age to age to defend the pious, destroy the wicked, and strengthen dharm.”

God manifests himself as a saviour of saintly men. He, the adored, is the one God after attaining whom there is nothing else to contemplate. Krishn assumes a manifest form from age to age to destroy impediments that obstruct the smooth flow of righteous impulses such as wisdom, renunciation and restraint, as also to annihilate the demoniacal forces of passion, anger, attachment and repugnance, and to reinforce dharm.

“Age”, as used by Krishn here, does not refer to historical ages like the Golden Age (Satyug) or the Iron Age (Kaliyug). It rather alludes to the stages of rise and fall, of the waxing and waning, of dharm through which human nature has to pass. These are stages of dharm and the human heart has to progress through them. Goswami Tulsidas has written about it in Ram Charit Manas (7. 10).- the devotional retelling and translation of the Indian epic, Ramayan from Sanskrit into the language of the people by the poet Tulsidas. The stages of dharm undergo variation in every heart at all times, not because of ignorance but because of the operation of the divine power of maya. This is what has been named atm-maya in the sixth verse of the chapter. Inspired by God, this knowledge is the one which makes the heart a veritable dwelling of God. But how can one know through which Stage one is passing at the moment? When virtue and moral goodness (sattwa) alone are active in the heart, when passion and ignorance have subsided, when all fears are stilled, when there is no feeling of repulsion, when there is the necessary strength to rest firmly on the signals that are received from the desired goal, when the mind is overflowing with happiness-then alone is one enabled to enter into the Golden Age. On the other hand, when the forces of darkness (tamas), combined with passion and moral blindness (rajas), are sweeping through, when there are animosities and conflicts all around, the worshipper is passing through the Iron Age (Kaliyug). When there is predominance of ignorance and abundance of lethargy, slumber and

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥ ८ ॥

procrastination, that is the stage of the Kaliyug of dharm. The man passing through this stage does not do his duty even though he knows it. He knows what he is forbidden to do, and yet he does it. These stages of dharm, of its ascent and descent, are determined by innate properties. These stages are the four ages (yug) according to some, the four classes (varn) according to others, and the four levels of spiritual seeking-excellent, good, medium, and low-according to yet others. In all the stages God stands by the worshipper. Nevertheless, there is a plenty of divine favour at the highest stage, whereas the assistance appears to be meagre at the lower stages.

So Krishn tells Arjun that a worshipper who is earnestly devoted to his ultimate goal is a sage, but he can be saved only when the flow of divine impulses such as wisdom, renunciation, and self-restraint, which provide access to the object, is unimpeded. Similarly, doers of wicked deeds are not undone just by the destruction of their nonexistent mortal bodies, because they will be reborn with the same wicked impressions (sanskar) they had earned in the previous life, and do the same evil which they had done before. So Krishn manifests himself in all ages to destroy moral perversions and to strengthen dharm. Installation of the one changeless God alone is the final destruction of evil.

In brief, Krishn has said that he manifests himself again and again, in all circumstances and categories, to destroy evil and foster good, and to strengthen faith in the Supreme Spirit. But he does this only if there is profound regret in the worshippers' heart. So long as the grace of the worshipped God is not with us, we cannot even know whether evil has been destroyed or how much of it still remains. From the beginning to the moment of final attainment, God stays by the worshipper at all stages. He manifests himself only in the devotee's heart. Doesn't everyone see him when he manifests himself? According to Krishn it is not so.

9. "He who has perceived the essence of my radiant incarnations and works, O Arjun, is never born again after discarding his body, but dwells in me."

जन्म कर्मच मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वः ।

त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥ ९ ॥

God's incarnation, his gradual manifestation through profound remorse, and his works-eradication of hindrances which generate evil, provision of the essentials of Self-realization, and reinstatement of dharm- are not like the birth and deeds of mortals. Perceived only as abstractions, God's incarnation and operations cannot be seen with physical eyes. He cannot be measured by mind and wisdom. God, so inscrutable and mysterious, is perceptible only to him who has known the reality. Only he can view God's incarnation and works, and once he has made this direct perception, he is not born again but dwells in Krishn.

When seers alone can see God's incarnation and works, why do we have these crowds of hundreds of thousands of men awaiting the birth of God so that they can see him? Are we all seers? There are many who masquerade as sages, mainly by dressing as holy men, and who claim that they are incarnations, and whose agents resort to publicity to prove it. The credulous rush like sheep to have a view of these "God-men," but Krishn affirms that only men of perfection can see God. Now, who is this man we call a seer?

Giving his verdict on the real and the false in Chapter 2, Krishn told Arjun that the unreal has no being and that the real has never been nonexistent in all time-past, present and future. This has been the experience of seers rather than of linguists or wealthy men. Now he reiterates that although God manifests himself, only perceivers of essence can see him. He has been united with the ultimate reality and become a seer. We do not become seers by learning to count the five (or twenty-five) elements. Krishn further says that the Soul alone is the ultimate reality. When the Soul is united with this Universal Spirit, he too becomes God. So only a man who has realized the Self can see and comprehend God's manifestation. It is evident therefore that God manifests himself in a worshippers's heart. At the outset the worshipper is not able to recognize the power which transmits signals to him. Who is showing him the way? But after he has perceived the truth of the Supreme Spirit, he begins to see and understand, and thereafter when he discards the body he is not reborn.

Krishn has said that his manifestation is internal, obscure, and luminous, and that the one who sees his radiance becomes one with him. But instead of this people have made his idols which they

worship; and they imagine that he dwells somewhere in heaven. But this is far from the truth. Krishn only means by this that if men do the ordained task, they will find that they too are radiant. What others have the potential to be, Krishn already is. He represents the possibilities of mankind-their future. The day we achieve perfection within ourselves, we will also be what Krishn is; we will be identical with him. Incarnation is never external. If a heart is brimming with love and adoration, there is a possibility of its experiencing the divine incarnation. All the same Krishn provides solace to the common people by telling them that many have realized him by treading on the ordained path.

10. “Free from passion and anger, wholly dedicated to me, finding shelter in me, and purified by knowledge and penance, many have realized my being.”

Many who have taken refuge in Krishn- with single-mindedness and complete detachment, freed equally from passion and passionlessness, fear and fearlessness, anger and absence of anger, and purified by knowledge and penance, have attained to his state. It is not that only now it is so. This canon has always been in operation. Many have attained to his state before. But what is the way? Krishn shapes himself and appears in a heart that is filled with profound sorrow at the predominance of unrighteousness. It is people with such hearts who realize him. What Yogeshwar Krishn had previously called perception of reality he now calls knowledge (gyan). God is the ultimate reality. To perceive him is wisdom. Men with this knowledge therefore realize him. Here the problem is resolved and Krishn now proceeds to distinguish worshippers according to their qualities.

11. “O Parth, as men worship me, even so do I accept them, and knowing this the wise follow me in every way.”

Krishn rewards his worshippers according to the nature of their

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥ १० ॥
ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥ ११ ॥

devotion; he assists them in the same degree. It is the worshipper's dedication that is returned to him as grace. Knowing this secret, the righteous conduct themselves with single-mindedness according to the way laid down by him. They who are dear to him act according to his way. They do what he ordains them to do.

God shows his favour by standing with the worshipper as a charioteer; he begins to walk along with the worshipper and manifest his glory. This is the form of his loving care. He stands up for the destruction of forces that generate wickedness and to protect righteous impulses that provide access to reality. Unless the worshipped God acts as the earnest charioteer who alerts at every step, despite his dedication and closing his eyes in meditation, and all other endeavours, the worshipper cannot cope with the adversities of the material world successfully. How is he to know how much distance he has covered and how much more remains to be covered? The adored God stands inseparably with the Self and guides him: that he is now at this point, that he should do this, and walk like that. Thus the gulf of nature is gradually bridged and, guiding the Soul ahead by gradual steps, God at last enables him to merge into him. Worship and adoration have to be performed by the devotee, but the distance on the path which is covered by the devotee is only by God's grace. Knowing this, men who are pervaded by divine sentiment through and through follow Krishn's precept. But they do not always do this in the right way.

12. "Desiring fruits of their action, men worship manifold gods, for the rewards of action are then earned quickly."

Desiring accomplishment of the action within this human body, men take to the worship of many gods. -that is, they cultivate the several righteous impulses. Krishn has told Arjun to perform the ordained action, which is performance of yagya, a way of worship, in which the incoming and outgoing life-breaths are offered to God as oblation and the outward-looking senses are burnt out in the fire of self-restraint, and whose final outcome is the attainment of God. The true meaning of action is worship and this is again clarified

काङ्क्षन्त कर्मणां सिद्धिं यजन्त इह देवताः ।

क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिर्भवति कर्मजा ॥ १२ ॥

later in this chapter. The outcome of this action is oneness with the eternal God, the supreme goal: the state of total actionlessness. Krishn says that men who follow his way, worship gods for the attainment of actionlessness, that is, they strengthen the divine impulses within.

Krishn said in Chapter 3 that Arjun ought to practise yagya to foster gods-to strengthen his righteous impulses. He will progress more and more as these impulses are gradually strengthened and augmented. Thus, advancing step by step, he will at last achieve the ultimate bliss. This is the final stage of the process of spiritual advancement that has to be gone through from the beginning to the end. Stressing the point, Krishn says that they who follow him, even though aspiring for accomplishment of action in their human bodies, tend the righteous impulses which quicken the advent of the state of actionlessness. Never failing, the process invariably succeeds. What is the meaning of “quickly” or “soon” here? Is it that no sooner do we commence action that we are rewarded with the final achievement? According to Krishn, it is decreed that this height can be only gradually conquered, moving step by step. No one can leap across to the summit at once and bring about a miracle like the revelations that teachers of divinity nowadays claim for abstract meditation. Let us now see how it is.

13. “Although I have created the four classes (varn)-Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudr-according to innate properties and actions, know me the immutable as a non-doer.”

Krishn represents himself as the maker of the four classes. Does it mean that he has divided men into four rigid categories determined by birth? The truth is rather that he has divided actions into four classes on the basis of inherent properties. All the same, as he tells Arjun, he-the imperishable God-is a non-agent and should be known as such. The innate property (*gun*) of a being or of a thing is a measure, a yardstick. If the dominant property is

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।

तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्वकर्तारमव्ययम् ॥ १३ ॥

that of ignorance or darkness (*tamas*), it will result in an irresistible inclination to laziness, excessive sleep, wantonness, aversion to work, and compulsive addiction to evil in spite of the realization that it is evil. How can worship commence in such a state 'We sit' and worship for two hours and we try to do it with the utmost earnestness, and yet we fail to secure even ten minutes that are truly propitious. The body is still and quiet, but the mind which should be really quiet soars aloft weaving webs of fancies. Waves upon waves of speculation toss it. Then why do we sit idly in the name of meditation and waste time? The only remedy at this stage is to dedicate ourselves to the service of wise men who dwell in the unmanifest and of those who have gone ahead of us on the path. This will subdue negative impressions and strengthen thoughts that are conducive to worship.

Gradually, with the diminishing of forces of darkness and ignorance, there is the growing sway of the quality of rajas, and a partial awakening of the property of good and moral virtue (*sattwa*) as well, because of which the worshipper's ability is elevated to the Vaishya level. Then the same worshipper begins spontaneously to imbibe qualities such as control of the senses and to accumulate other virtuous impulses. Proceeding further on the path of action, he is endowed with the wealth of righteousness. The property of rajas now grows faint and *tamas* is dormant. At this stage of development the worshipper steps on to the Kshatriya level. Prowess, the ability to be immersed in action, unwillingness to retreat, mastery over feelings, the capacity to carve his way through the three properties of nature-are now the inherent features of the worshipper's disposition. With yet further refinement of action, *sattwa* makes its approach, at which there is the evolution of virtues such as control of the mind and senses, concentration, innocence, contemplation and abstract meditation, and faith as well the capacity to hear the voice of God-all qualities that provide access to Him. With the emergence of these qualities the worshipper comes to belong to the Brahmin class. This, however, is the lowest stage of worship at this level. When ultimately the worshipper is united with God, at that point-the highest point-he is neither a Brahmin, nor a Kshatriya, nor a Vaishya, nor a Shudr. So worship of God is the only action-the ordained action. And it is this one action that is

divided into four stages according to the motivating properties. The division was made, as we have seen, by a saint—by a Yogeshwar. A sage dwelling in the unmanifest was the maker of this division. Yet Krishn tells Arjun to regard him, the indestructible and maker of varn, as a non-doer. How can it be so?

14. “I am unsullied by action because I am not attached to it, and they who are aware of this are in the like fashion unfettered by action.”

Krishn is unattached to the fruits of action. He said before that the deed by which yagya is accomplished is action, and that the one who tastes the nectar of wisdom generated by yagya merges into the changeless, eternal God. So the final consequence of action is attainment of the Supreme Spirit himself. And Krishn has overcome even the desire for God because he has become identical with Him. So he is also unmanifest like God. There is now no power beyond for which he should strive. So he is untouched by action, and they who know him from the same level, from the level of God realization, are also not bound by action. Such are the realized sages who have reached the level of Krishn’s accomplishment.

15. “Since it is with this wisdom that men aiming at salvation from worldly existence have also performed action in earlier times, you too should follow the example of your predecessors.”

In the past, too, men desiring salvation had acted with the same realization: that the patterns of action are severed when as the final outcome of his action the doer is one with God, and when he is liberated from desire even for him. Krishn belongs to this state. So he is untainted by action and, if we have what he has, we too will be freed from the bonds of action. Whoever knows what Krishn knows from his elevated position will be freed from action. So

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ।

इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते ॥ १४ ॥

एवं ज्ञात्वा कृतं कर्म पूर्वैरपि मुमुक्षुभिः ।

कुरु कर्मैव तस्मात्त्वं पूर्वैतरंकृतम् ॥ १५ ॥

whatever Krishn might have been, the unmanifest God or an enlightened sage, his attainment is within the reach of all of us. It was with this kind of wisdom that earlier men aspiring for salvation had set upon the path of action. It is for this reason that Arjun is told to do what his predecessors have done. This is the only way that leads to the sublime good.

So far Krishn has stressed the performance of action, but he has not yet explained what this action is. He only mentioned it in Chapter 2 and told Arjun to listen to him on selfless action. He described its special features, one of which is that it gives protection against the terrible fear of birth and death. He then dwelt upon the precautions that have to be observed in its performance. But despite all this he has not pointed out what action is. He later added, in Chapter 3, that, whether one prefers the Way of Knowledge or the Way of Selfless Action, action is a necessity in each case. One becomes neither wise by renouncing action nor emancipated from action by just not undertaking it. They who suppress their organs of action with violence are just arrogant hypocrites. So Arjun should act, restraining his senses with the mind. Krishn told him to do the ordained action, which is performance of yagya, to clarify the meaning of action. And now in this chapter he has told Arjun that even scholars of great erudition are confounded by the problems of what action is and what actionlessness is. So it is important that action and actionlessness are understood well.

16. “Even wise men are confused about the nature of action and actionlessness, and so I shall explain the meaning of action to you well, so that knowing it you may be emancipated from evil.”

What are action and the state in which there is no action? Even men of learning are confounded by these questions. So Krishn tells Arjun that he is going to expound well the meaning of action to him, so that he can be freed from worldly bondage. He has already said that action is something that liberates from the fetters of temporal life. Now, again, he stresses the importance of knowing what it is.

किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः ।

तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्षयसेऽशुभात् ॥ १६ ॥

17. “It is essential to know the nature of action as well as of actionlessness, and also that of meritorious action, for the ways of action are (So) inscrutable.”

It is of the utmost importance to know what action is and what actionlessness is, as also the action which is free from all doubt and ignorance and which is undertaken by men of wisdom who have renounced all worldly desire and attachment. This is imperative because the problem of action is a great riddle. Some commentators have interpreted the word “vikarm” in the text (which has been translated here as “meritorious action”) as “forbidden or prohibited action” and “diligent action,” etc. But the preposition vi⁴ prefixed to the root karm here denotes merit or excellence. The action of men who have attained to the ultimate bliss is free from all uncertainty and error. For sages who dwell and find contentment in the Self, and love him and the Supreme Spirit, there is neither any profit in accomplishing action nor any loss in forsaking it. But they yet act for the good of those who are behind them. Such action is pure and it is free from all doubt and ignorance.

We have just seen “meritorious action.” So we are now left with action and actionlessness. They are explained in the next verse, and if we do not understand the distinction between the two here, we will perhaps never understand it.

18. “One who can perceive non-action in action and action in non-action is a wise man and an accomplished doer of perfect action.”

Action means worship; and the accomplished doer is one who sees non-action in action, that is, who contemplates God and yet believes simultaneously that rather than being the doer, he has only been prompted to action by his inherent properties. Only when

कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः

अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ॥ १७ ॥

कर्मण्यकर्मयः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्मयः ।

स बुद्धिमान्मयुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥ १८ ॥

4. Not only here but in the whole of the Geeta, wherever the preposition “vi” is prefixed to a root, it denotes excellence.

this ability to see non-action has been mastered and the continuity of action is unbroken, should one believe that action is proceeding in the right direction. The man with this insight is a wise man. verily a yogi, endowed with the means by which the individual Soul is united with the Supreme Spirit, and a doer of perfect action. There is not even the slightest error in his performance of action.

Briefly, then, worship is action. A man should practise it and yet see non-action in it, that is, realize that he is just an instrument while the real doer is the underlying property. When we know that we are non-doers and there is yet constant and unimpeded action, only then is made possible the performance of that action which results in the ultimate good. My noble teacher, the revered Maharaj Ji, used to say to us, "Until God runs into a charioteer to restrain and guide, real worship does not begin." Whatever is done before this stage is no more than a preliminary attempt to be admitted to the way of action. The whole weight of the yoke rests on the oxen and yet the ploughman is the one who drives them, and the ploughing of the field is said to be his accomplishment. Even so although all the burden of worship is borne by the worshipper, the real worshipper is God because he is always by the devotee, urging and guiding him. Until God delivers his judgement, we cannot even know what has been done through us. Are we yet settled in the Supreme Spirit or are we just roaming about in the wilderness of nature? The worshipper who thus goes ahead on the spiritual path under God's guidance, and who acts with constant belief that he is a non-doer, is truly wise; he knows the reality and he is indeed a yogi. However, is the worshipper to go on acting for ever or will there ever be a point of respite? Yogeshwar Krishn speaks about this next.

But, before we come to the next verse, let us recall briefly, for the sake of better understanding, what Krishn has said about action and yagya, so far. What is usually done in the name of action, he has said, is not action. Action is a prescribed undertaking-the performance of yagya. Whatever else besides it is done is not action. According to Krishn anything apart from this that is done is worldly bondage rather than action. From what Krishn has spoken about the nature of yagya, it is evident that it is a particular mode of worship which guides the devotee to the adored God and effects his dissolution in Him.

For the performance of this yagya one has to subdue the senses, control the mind, and augment pious impulses. Concluding this part of the argument, Krishn said that many yogis depend upon serenity of breath during silent recitation of the deity's name by restraining the life-winds, in which state there is neither internal volition nor coming into the mind of any desire from the external environment. In such a state of total restraint of the mind, when even the restrained mind is dissolved, the worshipper merges into the changeless, eternal God. This is yagya, the performance of which is action. Therefore, the true meaning of action is "worship;" it means divine adoration and practice of yog. And this is what is treated at length later in the chapter under review. So far only a distinction has been made between action and non-action, the awareness of which will guide the worshipper on to the right path and enable him to tread effectively on it.

19. "Even the learned call that man a sage all of whose actions are free from desire and will, (both) burnt to ashes by the fire of knowledge."

It was said in the last verse that with the acquisition of the capacity of perceiving non-action in action, the man who is engaged in action grows into a doer of perfect action in which there is not even the slightest flaw. Now it is added that restraint of desire and will is a victory of the mind. So action is something that elevates the mind above desire and will. Krishn tells Arjun that a well-commenced action gradually becomes so refined and sublimated that it takes the mind above will as well as irresolution and then, with the burning out of even the last desire which he does not know but which he was previously eager to know, the worshipper is blessed with direct perception of God. Direct knowledge of God by following the path of action is called knowledge (gyan): the sacred knowledge that enables the Soul to be united with the Supreme Spirit. The fire of this direct perception of God annihilates action for ever. What was sought has been achieved. There is nothing beyond it to quest for. Who is there beyond God to search for with

यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसङ्कल्पवर्जिताः ।
ज्ञानग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुं पण्डितं बुधाः ॥ १९ ॥

further endeavour? So with the attainment of this wisdom, the need for action comes to an end. Rightly have sages called men with such wisdom pandit, men of profound erudition. Their learning is perfect. But what does such a saint do? How does he live? Krishn now illumines his way of life.

20. “Independent of the world, ever contented, and renouncing all attachment to action as well as its fruits, such a man is free from action even while he is engaged in it.”

Declining to rest upon objects of the world, utterly contented with dwelling in the eternal God, and discarding not only desire for the fruits of action but even attachment to God because now he is not removed from Him, this sage is a non-doer even while he is diligently employed in the performance of action.

21. “He who has conquered his mind and senses, and given up all objects of sensual pleasure, does not partake of sin even when his body seems to be engaged in action.”

It is only the physical body of the man, who has overcome both his mind and senses, renounced all objects of worldly enjoyment, and achieved total freedom from desire, that seems to be engaged in action, whereas, in truth, he does nothing, and that is why he does not incur sin. He is perfect and so he is emancipated from the cycle of birth and death.

22. “Contented with what comes to him unsought, he who is indifferent to happiness and sorrow, free from envy, and even-minded in success and failure, is a man of equanimity, unenslaved by action even when he performs it.”

When a man is contented with whatever comes to him without being desired or asked for, indifferent to happiness and sorrow,

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतुप्तो निराश्रयः ।
कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किञ्चित् करोति सः ॥ २० ॥
निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः ।
शरीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥ २१ ॥
यद्दृच्छालाभसंतुष्टो द्वन्द्वातीतो विमत्सरः ।
समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च कृत्वापि न निबध्यते ॥ २२ ॥

and love and animosity, free from any negative feeling, and abiding with equanimity in attainment and nonattainment, he is not fettered by action even though he appears to be engaged in it. Since the goal he had aimed at is now achieved and it will not ever desert him, he is freed from the terror of defeat. Looking alike at achievement and non-achievement this man acts, but without infatuation. And what he does is nothing other than yagya, the act of supreme sacrifice. Reiterating the concept, Krishn adds:

23. “When a man is free from attachment, his mind rests firmly in the knowledge of God, and when his actions are like the yagya made to God, he is truly emancipated and all his actions cease to be.”

Performance of yagya itself is action and direct perception of God is knowledge. Acting in the spirit of sacrifice and dwelling in the knowledge achieved from direct perception of God, all the actions of this liberated man who is devoid of attachment and desire undergo a process of dissolution. Now his actions are of no consequence to the worshipper, because God, the goal he had striven for, is no longer away from him. Now, what other fruit will grow from a fruit? Therefore, such liberated men's need of action for themselves comes to an end. Yet they act as messiahs, but even while doing this they remain untouched by what they do. Krishn accounts for this in the following verse :

24. “Since both the dedication and the oblation itself are God, and it is the Godlike teacher who offers the oblation to the fire which is also God, the attainment, too, of the man whose mind is set on Godlike action is God himself.”

The emancipated man's yagya is God, what he offers as oblation is God, and the sacred fire to which the sacrifice is made is also God. That is to say that what is offered by the Godlike worshipper to the sacred fire that is an embodiment of God is also God himself.

गतंसङ्गस्य मुक्तस्य ज्ञानावस्थितचेतसः ।

यज्ञायाचरतः कर्म समग्रं प्रविलीयते ॥ २३ ॥

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥ २४ ॥

That which is worthy of being secured by the man whose actions have been dissolved and stilled by God's loving touch is also God. So this man does nothing; he only acts for the good of others.

These are attributes of the realized sage who has reached the stage of final attainment. But what is the nature of yagya that is performed by worshippers who have just set out on the quest ? Krishn exhorted Arjun in the last chapter to perform the ordained action. Elaborating on what this ordained action is, he said that it is performance of yagya. (3.9) Anything apart from this that is done by mortals is only bondage. But action in the true sense provides freedom from fetters of the world. So Arjun was told to rid himself of attachment and act in the spirit of renunciation for the accomplishment of yagya. In doing so, however, Yogeshwar Krishn raised a new question: What is yagya and how to perform it in the due manner? Thereafter he elucidated the characteristic features of yagya, its origin, and the profit that ensues from it. So the characteristic features of yagya, were dwelt upon. But it is only now that the meaning of yagya is explained.

25. "Some yogis perform yagya to foster divine impulses, whereas some other yogis offer the sacrifice of yagya to (a seer who is) the fire of God. "

In the last verse Krishn portrayed the sacrifice made by sages who have made their abode in the Supreme Spirit. But he now depicts the yagya performed by worshippers who wish to be initiated into yog. These novices undertake sincere performance of yagya to gods to foster them, that is, they strengthen and augment divine impulses in the heart. Here it is useful to remember how Brahma had directed mankind to foster gods by yagya. The more virtues there are cultivated and garnered in the heart, the more the worshipper advances towards the ultimate excellence until he at last attains it. The novice worshipper's yagya is thus aimed at strengthening the forces of righteousness in his heart.

दैवमेवापरे यज्ञं योगिनः पर्युपासते ।

ब्रह्माग्नावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैवोपजुह्वति ॥ २५ ॥

A detailed account of the divine treasure of righteousness is given in the first three verses of Chapter 16. Righteous impulses lie dormant in all of us and it is an important duty to cherish and wake them up. Pointing this out, Yogeshwar Krishn tells Arjun not to grieve because he is endowed with these godly merits. With them he will dwell in Krishn and attain to his eternal being, because righteousness brings the ultimate good. On the contrary, there are the demoniacal, devilish forces which lead the soul to rebirth in low and inferior forms; It is these negative impulses that are offered as oblation to fire. This is yagya and also its inception.

Other yogis perform yagya by offering sacrifice to the accomplished teacher in his heart-the sacred fire that is an embodiment of God. Krishn further adds that in the human body he is the adhiyagya or that in whom the oblation is consumed. Krishn too was a yogi and an accomplished teacher. These other yogi offer oblations to the Godlike teacher who also annihilates evils like fire. They perform sacrifices aimed at this accomplished teacher who is also an embodiment of sacrifice. In brief, they concentrate their minds on the form of the accomplished teacher, a realized sage.

26. “While some offer their hearing and other senses as sacrifice to the fire of self-restraint, others offer speech and other sense objects to the fire of the senses.”

Yet other yogi offer all their senses of action-ear, eye, skin, tongue, and nose-to the fire of self-control, that is, they subdue their senses by withdrawing them from their objects. There is no real fire in this case. As everything cast into fire is reduced to ashes, even so the fire of restraint destroys the outward looking senses. There are then yogi who offer all their senses of perception, sound, touch, form, taste, and smell, to the fire of senses; they sublimate their desires and thus turn them into effective means for achievement of the supreme goal.

After all, the worshipper has to carry on his task in this world itself, assaulted all the while by good as well evil utterances of people around him. No sooner than he hears words that arouse

passion, however, he sublimates them into the feeling of renunciation and thus burns them in the fire of the senses. It happened so once with Arjun himself. He was engaged in contemplation when all of a sudden his ears were thrilled by lilting melody. When he looked up he saw Urvashi,⁵ the, heavenly courtesan, standing before him. All the other men were enthralled by her sensual charm, but Arjun saw her with filial sentiment as mother. The voluptuous music thus grew faint in his mind and was buried in his senses.

Here we have the fire of the senses. Just as objects put into fire are burnt out, sensual forms--sight, taste, smell, touch, and sound--are bereft of their power to distract the worshipper when they are transformed and shaped in accordance with the requirements of his goal. Having no longer any interest in sense-perceptions, the worshipper does not now assimilate them .

Words like "other" (apare and anye) in the verses under discussion represent different states of the same worshipper. They are the varying, high and low, states of mind of the same worshipper rather than different forms of yagya.

27. "Yet other yogi offer the functions of their senses and operations of their life-breaths to the fire of yog (self-control) kindled by knowledge."

In the yagya Krishn has so far spoken of, there are a gradual fostering of pious impulses, restraint of the working of senses, and parrying off of sensual perceptions through a modification of their intent. In a still higher state than this, yogi offer as oblation the functions of all senses and operations of life-breaths to the fire of yog that is lit up by knowledge of God. When restraint is integrated with the Self and the operations of breath and senses are stilled, the current which stimulates passions and the current which propels one towards God merge into the Self. The outcome of yagya then

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे ।
आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुह्वति ज्ञानदीपिते ॥ २७ ॥

5. One of the celestial maidens, described by the King of Death in the Kathopanishad as most beautiful to behold and such indeed as is not meant for mortals.

emerges as God-realization, the culmination of this spiritual exercise. When one dwells in the God who had to be realized, nothing else remains to be achieved. Yogeshwar Krishn again explains yagya :

28. “Just as many perform yagya by making material gifts in service of the world, some other men perform yagya through physical mortification, some perform the sacrifice of yog, and yet others who practise severe austerities perform yagya through the study of scriptures.”

There are many who make sacrifice of wealth. They contribute riches to the service of saints. Krishn accepts whatever gifts are offered to him with devotion and he is a benefactor of those who make these gifts. This is the yagya of wealth or riches. To serve every man, to bring those who have strayed back to the right path, by contributing wealth to the cause is the sacrifice of riches. These sacrifices have the capability to nullify the natural sanskars. Some men mortify their senses through penances for the observance of their dharm. In other words, their sacrifice, made according to their inherent properties, is penance-humiliation of the body, and it belongs to the stage between the lowest and highest levels of yagya. Wanting in adequate knowledge of the path that leads to God, the Shudr worshipper who is just setting out on the way of worship undergoes penance by rendering service, the Vaishya by acquisition of divine riches, the Kshatriya by demolishing passion and anger, and the Brahmin with his ability to be united with God. All of them have to toil alike. In truth yagya is one and there are only its lower and higher stages governed by innate properties.

My noble teacher, the revered Maharaj Ji, used to say, “To trim the mind along with the body and senses in keeping with the goal, is penance. They tend to digress from the goal but have to be pulled back and applied to it.”

There are many who practise the yagya of yog. Yog is the joining of the Soul, wandering amidst nature, with God who is beyond nature. A clear definition of yog is found in the twenty-third verse of

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपाने तथापरे ।

प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणाः ॥ २९ ॥

Chapter 6. Usually, the meeting of two objects is yog. But is it yog if a pen meets paper or a dish meets a table. Of course not, because both are made of the same five elements: they are one, not two. Nature and the Self are two entities, distinct from each other. There is yog when the nature-based Soul meets the identical God, and when nature is dissolved in the Soul. This is the true yog. So there are many who resort to a strict practice of restraint because it is conducive to this union. The practicers of the yog of sacrifice (yagya) and they who are given to severe austerities keep in view their own Self and perform the yagya of knowledge. Here, nonviolent but severe austerities such as restraint, religious observance, the appropriate posture of sitting, serenity of breath, withholding of the mind along with the physical organs, retention, meditation and perfect absorption of thought in the Supreme Spirit, are indicated as the eightfold features of yog. There are many who undertake Self-study because they aim at Self-knowledge. Reading books is but the first step to Self-knowledge, for in the true sense it is derived only from contemplation of the Self which brings about attainment of God, and the final outcome of which is knowledge or intuitive perception. Krishn now points out what is done for this yagya of knowledge or contemplation of the Self.

29. “As some offer their exhalation to inhalation, others offer their inhaled breath to the exhaled breath, while yet others practise serenity of breath by regulating their incoming and outgoing breath.”

Meditators on the Self, sacrifice the vital air to apan and similarly apan to pran. Going even higher than this, other yogi restrain all life-winds and take refuge in the regulation of breath (pranayam).

That which Krishn calls pran-apan, Mahatma Buddh has named anapan. This is what he has also described as shwas-prashwas (inhaling and exhaling). Pran is the breath that is inhaled, whereas apan is the breath which moves out. Sages have found by experience that along with breath we also imbibe desires from

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपाने तथापरे ।

प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणाः ॥ २९ ॥

the surrounding environment and, similarly, transmit waves of inner pious as well as impious thoughts with our exhalations. Non-assimilation of any desire from an external source is the offering of pran as oblation, whereas suppression of all inner desires is the sacrifice of apan, so that there is generation of neither internal desire nor grief because of thoughts of the external world. So when both pran and apan are properly balanced, breath is regulated. This is pranayam, the serenity of breath. This is the state in which the mind is supreme, for restraint of breath is the same as restraint of mind.

Every accomplished sage has taken up this subject and there is mention of it in the Ved (Rig, 1.164.45 and Atharv, 9.10.27). This is what the revered Maharaj Ji also used to say. According to him, the one and only name of god is recited at four levels: baikhari, madhyama, pashyanti, and para. Baikhari is that which is manifest and audible. The name is pronounced in such a way that we as well as other men sitting around us may hear it. Madhyama is muttering the name at a medium pitch, so that the worshipper alone, but not even the man sitting beside, may hear it. This articulation is made within the throat. There is thus the gradual generation of an unbroken stream of harmony. When worship is yet more refined, the stage is reached when the worshipper develops the capacity to visualize the name. After this the name is not recited, because it has now become an integral part of the life-breath. The mind stands as an onlooker and just views what the breath shapes. When does it come in? And when does it go out? And what does it say? Sages of perception tell us that it articulates nothing except the name. Now the worshipper does not even recite the name; he just listens to the melody of the name arising from his breath. He just watches his breath and that is why this stage of breath-control is called *pashyanti*.

At the stage of pashyanti, the mind is set up as a witness-an onlooker. But even this is not needed when there is yet further refinement. If the desired name is just imprinted on memory, its melody will be heard spontaneously. There is no need of recitation now, for the name rings in the mind by itself. The worshipper does not recite any longer and neither does he have to compel the mind to hear the name, and yet the recitation goes on. This is the stage

of ajapa, of the unrecited. It will be a mistake to think, however, that this stage is reached without commencing the process of recitation. If it has not been initiated; there will be nothing like ajapa. Ajapa means that recitation which does not desert us even though we do not recite. If only memory of the name is firmly setup in the mind, recitation begins to flow through it like a perennial stream. This spontaneous recitation is named ajapa and this is the recitation by transcendental articulation (parvani). It takes one to God who is the essence beyond nature. There is no variation in speech after this, for after providing a view of God it is dissolved in him. This is why it is called para.

In the quoted verse, Krishn has only told Arjun to watch his breath, whereas later he himself will stress the importance of intoning OM. Gautam Buddh too has dwelt upon inhalations and exhalations in Anapan Sad. After all, what does the Yogeshwar really intend to say? In truth, beginning with baikhari, then progressing on to madhyama, and going even further than this, at the stage of pashyanti, one attains control over breath. At this stage recitation is integrated with breath. And what is there to recite now when the worshipper has just to watch his breath? It is for this reason that Krishn speaks only of pran-apan rather than telling Arjun to “recite the name.” This is so because there is no need to tell him this. If he says it, the worshipper will go astray and begin to grope about in the dark alleys of neither levels. Mahatma Buddh, my noble Godlike teacher, and all those who have trodden this path say the same thing. Baikhari and madhyama are the portals by which we enter into the sphere of recitation. It is pashyanti that provides access into the name. The name begins to flow in an unbroken stream in para, and the internal, spontaneous, intoning of the name never abandons the worshipper after this.

The mind is linked with breath. That is the state of victory of the mind when the eye is set on the breath, when the name is incorporated into breath, and no desire of the external world can enter into the worshipper. With this the final outcome of yagya emerges.

30. “Yet others who subsist on strictly regulated breath and offer their breath to breath, and life to life, are all knowers of yagya, and the sins of all who have known yagya are destroyed.”

They who partake of restricted food offer as oblation their breath to breath-life to life. My noble teacher, the revered Maharaj Ji, used to say that the food, posture of sitting, and sleep of a yogi should be steady. Regulation of food and pleasure is a necessity. Many yogi who observe such discipline renounce their breath to breath, concentrating on inhalations and paying no heed to exhalations. With each incoming breath they hear OM. Thus men whose sins have been destroyed by yagya are men of true knowledge. Krishn now speaks of the outcome of yagya.

31. “O the best of Kuru, the yogi who have tasted the nectar flowing from yagya attain to the eternal supreme God, but how can the next life of men bereft of yagya be happy when even their life in this world is miserable?”

What yagya generates-what results from it, is nectar the substance of immortality. A direct experience of this is wisdom. The one who feeds on it becomes one with the eternal God. So yagya is something which with its completion unites the worshipper with God. According to Krishn, how can the next world bring happiness to men bereft of yagya when even the mortal, human birth is beyond their reach? It is their inevitable lot to be born in lower forms and nothing better than them. So the observance of yagya is a necessity.

32. “Many such yagya are laid down by the Ved but they all germinate and grow from the ordained action, and performing their various steps you will be free from worldly bondage.”

अपरे नियताहाराः प्राणान्प्राणेषु जुह्वति ।
सर्वेऽप्येते यज्ञविदो यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषाः ॥ ३० ॥
यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
नायं लोकोऽस्त्यज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्य कुरुसत्तम ॥ ३१ ॥
एवं बहुविध यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे ।
कर्मजान्विद्धि तान्सर्वानेवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ॥ ३२ ॥

There are several steps of yagya elaborated by the Ved-God's own words. After realization, God assumes the body of accomplished sages. The minds of men who have become one with God are then mere instruments. It is God who speaks through them. So it is in his voice that these yagya have been enunciated.

Krishn tells Arjun that he should know that all these yagya have arisen from action. This is what he has said before, too. (3. 14) He has just pointed out that all those, whose sins have been wiped out by yagya, are the real knowers of yagya. And now he tells Arjun that he will be freed from the bonds of the world if he knows that yagya arises from action. Here the Yogeshwar has clearly stated the meaning of action. That conduct is action by which yagya is accomplished.

Now, there is no harm in engaging ourselves in trade, service, and politics if in doing them we can earn divine riches, contemplate an accomplished teacher, restrain the senses, offer the oblation of outgoing breath to the incoming breath, sacrifice inhalations to exhalations, and regulate the vital winds of life. But we know that it is not so. Yagya is the only exercise that transports one to God the very moment it is complete. Do any other work you like if it takes you to God in the same way.

In fact, all these forms of yagya are but internal processes of contemplation-forms of worship which make God manifest and known. Yagya is the special ordained mode that helps the worshipper to traverse the path that leads to God. That by which this yagya is accomplished, regulation and serenity of breath, is action. The true meaning of "action" is therefore "worship".

It is usually said that whatever is done in the world is action. Work without desire or selfish interest is the Way of Selfless Action. Some feel that it is action if they sell imported fabric for greater profit. They feel they are men of action. For others, dealing in indigenous goods to serve the country is the Way of Selfless Action. If one acts with dedication or trades without thinking of profit and loss, that is the Way of Selfless Action. Fighting a war or contesting an election without thought of winning and losing makes one a doer of selfless action. But these deeds cannot bring salvation. Krishn has said categorically that the ordained action is only one, and he has told Arjun to do it. The performance of yagya is action. And

yagya is sacrifice of breath, restraint of the senses, contemplation of the Supreme Spirit-the accomplished teacher-who symbolizes yagya, and finally, regulation and serenity of breath. This is the stage of mind's conquest. The world is nothing but an extension of mind. In Krishn's words the transient world is conquered right here, "upon this bank and shoal of time," by men who have achieved even-mindedness. But what is the relation between such equanimity of mind and subjugation of the world? If the world itself is conquered, where does one halt? According to Krishn God is flawless and impartial, and unaffected by passion; and so is the mind of the man who has secured knowledge. So the two become one.

In brief, the world is an expanded form of the mind. So the mutable world is the object that has to be offered as a sacrifice. When the mind is perfectly controlled, there is also perfect control over the world. The outcome of yagya appears clearly when the mind is fully restrained. The nectar of knowledge that is generated by yagya takes the man who has tasted it to the immortal God. This is witnessed by all sages who have realized God. It is not that worshippers of different schools perform yagya in different ways. The different forms cited in the Geeta are only the higher and lower states of the same worship. That by which this yagya begins to be done is action. There is not a single verse in the entire Geeta which defends or approves of worldly enterprise as a way to the realization of God.

Usually, for the performance of yagya people build an altar, light a fire on it and, intoning swaha, cast barley grains and oil seeds into the sacred fire. Is this, we may ask, not yagya? Krishn has this to say about it:

33. "Sacrifice through wisdom is, O Parantap, in every way superior to sacrifices made with material objects, because (O Parth) all action ceases in knowledge, their culmination."

The yagya of wisdom, made by means of austerity, continence, faith, and knowledge, which brings about a direct perception of God, is the most propitious. All actions are fully dissolved in

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञाज्ज्ञानयज्ञः परंतप ।

सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ॥ ३३ ॥

this knowledge. Knowledge is thus the crowning point of yagya. Thenceforth there is neither any profit in the doing of action nor any loss in abstaining from it.

In the same way there are yagya that are performed with material objects, but they are insignificant in comparison with the yagya of knowledge which enables a man to have direct perception of God.⁶ Even if we sacrifice millions, build hundreds of altars for the sacred fire, contribute money to good causes, and invest money in the service of sages and saints, this yagya is much inferior to the sacrifice of knowledge. Krishn has just told us, that real yagya is restraint of the vital winds of life, subduing of the senses, and control of the mind. From where can we learn its mode? From temples, mosques or churches? Shall we get it by going on pilgrimage to holy places or by dipping ourselves in sacred rivers? Krishn's pronouncement is that it can be had from only one source, namely, the sage who has known the reality.

34. "Obtain that knowledge (from sages) through reverence, inquiry and innocent solicitation, and the sages who are aware of reality will initiate you into it."

So Arjun is advised to approach seers with reverence, self-surrender, and humility, to be instructed in true knowledge through devoted service and guileless curiosity. These seers will enlighten him on it. The ability to acquire this knowledge comes only with a wholly dedicated service. They are seers who enable us to have direct perception of God. They know the mode of yagya and they will teach it to Arjun. Had the war been external, what need was there of a seer?

तद्धिद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ ३४ ॥

6. The sage of Pippalad says, in the Prashn Upanishad, that they who desire children and are given to rites, considering them the highest accomplishment, attain to the world of the Moon (Rayi) and are born again on earth, but they who are devoted to the worship of the Self, by means of austerity, continence, faith, and knowledge, go by the northern path and attain the world of the Sun. (Pran)

Isn't Arjun standing directly before the Lord? Then why does Krishn ask him to go to a seer? In truth, the meaning of Krishn who was a yogi-indeed a Yogeshwar-is that today the worshipper is with him, but he may be confused in future when he is no longer present to guide him. "Ah me! " Arjun will say, "Krishn has gone and I don't know to whom to turn now for guidance. That is why Krishn tells Arjun categorically that he should approach seers who will instruct him in true knowledge.

35. "Knowing which, O son of Pandu, you will never again be a prey like this to attachment, and equipped with this knowledge you will see all beings within yourself and then within me."

After acquiring this knowledge from sages Arjun will be rid of all attachment. Possessed of this knowledge he will perceive all beings in his Self, that is, he will see the extension of the same Self everywhere, and only then can he become one with God. Thus the means of attaining to that God is the sage who has perceived reality.

36. "Even if you are the most heinous sinner, the ark of knowledge will carry you safely across all evils."

We should not make the error of concluding from this that we will know salvation even with committing more and yet more sin. Krishn rather intends to say by this that we should not be under the mistaken impression that we are such great sinners that there cannot be salvation for us. So this is Krishn's message of hope and courage to Arjun and to everybody: that despite being the doer of sins greater than the sins of all sinners he will sail across sins successfully, by the ark of knowledge acquired from seers. Thus-

यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।
येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥ ३५ ॥
अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं संतरिष्यसि ॥ ३६ ॥

37. “As blazing fire turns fuel to ashes, so verily O Arjun, the fire of knowledge reduces all action to ashes.”

Here we have a portrayal, not of an introduction to knowledge through which one approaches yagya, but of the culmination of knowledge or perception of God, in which there is first the destruction of all unrighteous inclinations and in which then even the act of meditation is dissolved. The one who had to be attained to has been attained. Now who is there to look for by further meditation? The sage with the wisdom that arises from perception of God brings his actions to an end. But where does this perception of God occur? Is it an external or internal phenomenon?

38. “Doubtlessly nothing in the world is more purifying than this knowledge and your heart will realize it spontaneously when you have attained to perfection on the Way of Action.”

Nothing in this world purifies as this knowledge does. And this knowledge will be manifest to the doer alone, not to anyone else, when his practice of yog has reached maturity, not at its inception, not in the middle, not externally but within his heart-within his Self. What is the required ability for this knowledge? In the words of the Yogeshwar,-

39. “The worshipper of true faith who has subdued his senses attains to this knowledge and at the very moment (of attainment) he is rewarded with the benediction of supreme peace.”

For realization of God one needs to possess faith, determination, and restraint of the senses. If there is no intensely felt curiosity for the knowledge of God, even taking refuge in a seer will not bring it.

Also, mere faith is not enough. The worshipper's effort may be

यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञानाग्निं सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥ ३७ ॥
न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥ ३८ ॥
श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतोन्द्रियः ।
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ ३९ ॥

feeble. Therefore, the determination to proceed resolutely along the prescribed way is a necessity. Along with this it is also necessary to restrain the senses. Realization of the Supreme God will not come easily to one who is not free from desire. So only a man who has faith, enthusiasm for action, and restraint of the senses can have this knowledge. And the very moment this knowledge dawns upon him, he is blessed with the ultimate peace, because after this there is left nothing more to strive for. After this he will never know anything other than peace. But,

40. “For a skeptic, bereft of faith and knowledge, who strays from the path of righteousness, there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next; he loses both the worlds.”

For the man who is ignorant of the way of yagya- for the doubting man who is devoid of faith and who strays from the path of good, there is no happiness, no next life in human form, and no God. So if there are any doubts in the worshipper, he should go to a seer and resolve them, or else he will never know the reality. So who is blessed with knowledge?

41. “O Dhananjay, action cannot bind the man who relies on God and who has surrendered all his actions to him by the practice of karm-yog and all whose doubts have been put to rest by knowledge.”

Action cannot enslave the man whose deeds are dissolved in God by the practice of yog, whose doubts have been resolved by perception, and who is united with God. Action will be brought to an end only by yog. Only knowledge will destroy doubts. So Krishn finally says:

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्धधानश्च संशयात्मा विनश्यति ।
नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः ॥ ४० ॥
योगसंन्यस्त कर्माणं ज्ञानसंछिन्नसंशयम् ।
आत्मवन्तः न कर्माणि निबद्धन्ति धनंजय ॥ ४१ ॥

42. “So, O Bharat, dwell in yog and stand up to cut down this irresolution that has entered into your heart because of ignorance with the steel of knowledge.”

Arjun has to fight. But the enemy-irresolution-is within his own heart, not outside. When we proceed on the way of devotion and contemplation, it is but natural that feelings of doubt and passion will arise as obstacles before us. These enemies launch a fearful assault. To fight them and overcome them, through the destruction of uncertainties by the practice of the ordained yagya, is the war that Arjun has to wage, and the result of this war for him will be absolute peace and victory after which there is no possibility of defeat.



At the outset of the chapter, Krishn says that he had imparted knowledge of yog to Vivaswat in the beginning. Vivaswat taught it to Manu and Manu to Ikshwaku, and thus the knowledge evolved to the stage of rajas. The teacher who had imparted this knowledge was Krishn or, in other words, one who is birthless and unmanifest. A realized sage too is birthless and unmanifest. His body is but an abode in which he dwells. It is God himself who speaks through his voice. It is by some such sage that yog is imparted. Even a glance of such a sage irradiates one's life-breath with the effulgence of Self-realization. Possessing the light it sends forth, the sun symbolizes the ever-luminous God who resides in, as well as, expresses himself through breath. “Imparting the knowledge of yagya to the Sun” stands for awakening of the divine life that lies dormant and unperceived in every human heart. Transmitted to breath this light is hallowed into a sacred discipline. In due course it enters the mind as a resolve. Realization of the significance of Krishn's utterance to Vivaswat gives rise to a hankering for achieving it and yog is then transformed into action.

The point in hand needs further elaboration. Vivaswat, Manu, and Ikshwaku are symbolic primogenitors of mankind. Vivaswat represents the unenlightened primitive man without spiritual

awakening. It is a sage who sows the seeds of devotion in this man. There then comes into being a desire for God that arises in the mind which is Manu in microcosm. The mind transforms the aspiration into an acute craving which is embodied as Ikshwaku, and the process of changing it into practice is speeded up. After having gone through the first two stages, when the worshipper is endowed with divine impulses, the yearning for God enters upon the third stage when yog becomes known and begins to manifest its glory. This is indeed a stage fraught with risk, for yog is now on the brink of destruction. But they who are loved devotees and, dear friends are provided with succour by sages like Krishn.

When Arjun refers to his recent birth, Krishn points out that, although unmanifest, imperishable, birthless, and pervading all beings, he yet manifests himself by atm-maya and by subduing by his yog his nature with its three properties. What then does he do after manifesting himself? Since the beginning he has undergone one incarnation after another to protect that which is fit for accomplishment, as well as to destroy forces which give rise to evils and to strengthen the Godlike dharm. His birth and acts are of a metaphysical nature and only a seer can perceive them. The state of Kaliyug (predominance of forces of darkness) brings about the advent of God, but only if there is earnest devotion. But novice worshippers are unable to know whether God is speaking to them or whether the signs coming to them are devoid of any purpose. Whose voice do we hear from the heavens? My noble teacher used to tell us that when God showers his grace and when he turns within the Self into a charioteer, he speaks and provides support from every column, every leaf, verily from emptiness itself, and from every corner. When with constant refinement there is awareness of the essence that is God, only then, by feeling his presence as if by touch, does the worshipper know the reality. So Krishn has told Arjun that his manifest form can be viewed only by seers, after which they are released from birth and death.

He has further explained the mode of God's manifestation: of how it is an event that occurs within the heart of a devoted yogi and certainly never externally. Krishn has said that action does not

bind him, and just so they who have attained to the same state are not bound by action. It was with realization of this truth that earlier men desiring salvation set out on the path of action to reach that state, and the man who has known what Krishn knows from his elevated position, and Arjun, too, desiring salvation, will be what Krishn is. This attainment is assured if yagya is performed. Krishn has then told us the nature of this yagya and that the final outcome of this exercise is realization of the highest reality-of the ultimate tranquillity. But where to go in order to know the way of knowledge? Krishn has advised Arjun to approach sages and win them over with reverence, humble inquiry, and guileless solicitation. He has also said unambiguously that this knowledge he can acquire only by his own action rather than through the conduct or action of others. Also, it will come to him when his yog is in an accomplished stage rather than at the outset. Perception of knowledge will be within the sphere of heart, not outside. And it comes only to those who are dedicated, determined, in control of their senses, and free from all doubt. So finally Arjun is advised to sever the irresolution in his heart with the sword of renunciation. Thus war is within the heart. The war of the Geeta is quite unconcerned with any external conflict.

In this chapter, Krishn has thus mainly elaborated and explained the nature and form of yagya, and added that the deed of accomplishing it is action.

**Thus concludes the Fourth Chapter, in the Upanishad of the
Shreemad Bhagwad Geeta, on the Knowledge of the
Supreme Spirit, the Science of Yog, and the Dialogue
between Krishn and Arjun, entitled:
“Yagya Karma-Spashtikaran or”
“Elucidation of the Deed of Yagya”.**

**Thus concludes Swami Adgadanand’s exposition of the
Fourth Chapter of the Shreemad Bhagwad Geeta in
“Yatharth Geeta”
HARI OMTATSAT**